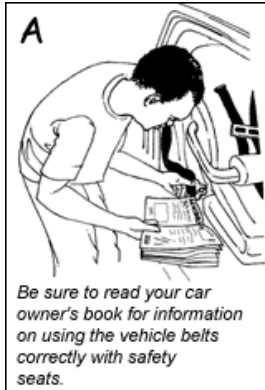




Tempe Fire Department Safety Tip

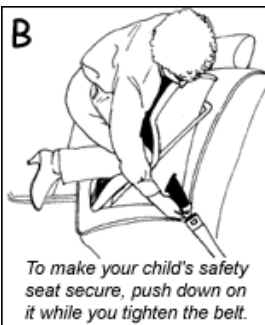
Tip #6 *Is Your Safety Seat Secure In the Car?*



To do its job, a child safety seat must be held securely against the vehicle seat back. If the lap part of the safety belt is not tight or the safety seat slides around on the vehicle seat, your child may not be protected.

Always read the instructions that come with the safety seat. Also read the section on safety belts and child safety seats (child restraints) in your vehicle owner's book (A). If you cannot attach your seat tightly, call your vehicle customer service number for help or the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

WARNING: Children age 12 and under should ride in the back seat. **Never** put an infant (less than one year old) rear facing in the front of a car with a passenger air bag. **Infants** must always ride in the back seat facing the **rear** of the car.



How Tightly Should a Safety Seat Be Attached?

The lap part of the belt must hold the safety seat firmly in place. To make it tight, push the safety seat down into the seat cushion while you tighten the belt around it. Push down on it with your full weight to get the belt really tight (B) (D).

To check for a tight fit, pull the safety seat forward and push it from side to side. If the belt loosens (C) or the base of the safety seat slides forward or sideward more than an inch, your child may not be well protected.

If the safety seat moves, first try another seat location in your vehicle with a different kind of belt. The lap belt in the middle of the back seat may work best to keep your **safety seat in place.**

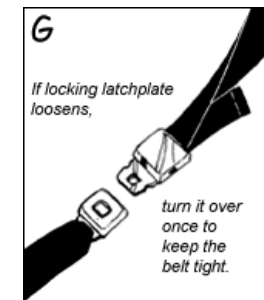
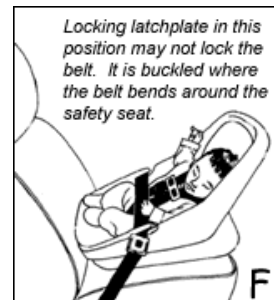
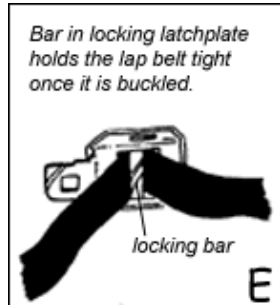
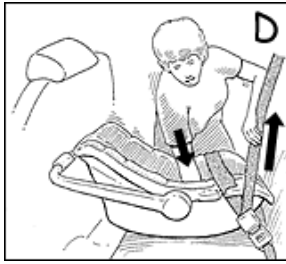


Which Kinds of Belts Are in Your Vehicle?

There are **lap belts** that hold the hips and **lap/shoulder belts** that hold the hips and one shoulder. there are several kinds of **retractors** to take up slack and **latch plates** that fit in the buckle. Read the following pages for the ways the belts, retractors, and latch plates in vehicles work.

Many vehicles have belts that stay loose while you drive and lock up in a crash. this sheet will tell you how to make this kind of belt stay tight.

The owner's manual for recent vehicles tells you about using belts for child safety seats. Starting with the 1996 model year, vehicles **MUST** have safety belts designed to stay tight around safety seats.



How to Check If A Belt Retractor Locks

There are two kinds of retractors that take up slack in the belt;

1. An "emergency locking retractor" locks only during a crash or sudden stop. During normal driving you can pull the belt in and out easily. Check it in a deserted parking lot with your lap/shoulder belt on. If you slam on the brakes while driving about 10 mph., you will feel the belt "grab" you.
2. An "automatic locking retractor" locks whenever you stop pulling it out. To check for an automatic locking retractor, pull the lap belt out and stop. When you pull on it again, you will find it is locked. This kind of belt will hold the safety seat tightly. Take the slack out by pushing the webbing back into the retractor.

"Switchable" Retractors

A switchable retractor works well with safety seats. It is an emergency locking retractor that can be switched to an automatic locking retractor. The retractor may be on either a lap belt or a lap/shoulder belt. The belt usually has a label on it telling you how it works (I). You also can read about it in your vehicle owner's book.

In most cases, you switch the retractor by pulling the belt slowly all the way out until it goes no farther and you hear a click. It may pull out from the lap end or the shoulder end. When you let the belt roll back, you will find that it locks every inch or so and will hold a safety seat tightly. In some vehicles, there is a button to push on the retractor instead. Again, check in the owner's book.

Belts with Locking Latch plates

Locking latch plates (E) work well with safety seats. They usually are found on lap belts in center, rear seats. Lap/shoulder belts in many vehicles also have them. A locking bar prevents the belt from loosening once it is tightened.

To tighten this kind of belt, pull on the loose end of the lap belt or on the shoulder part of the lap/shoulder belt. This tightens the lap belt. Then test for tightness by pulling the safety seat forward and side to side.

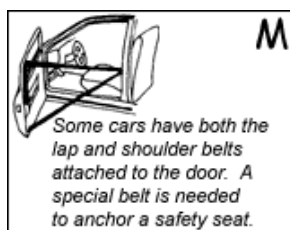
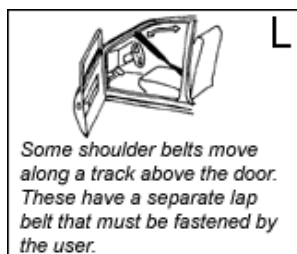
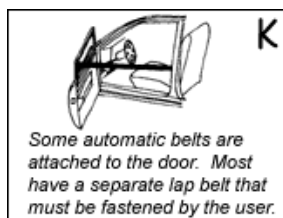
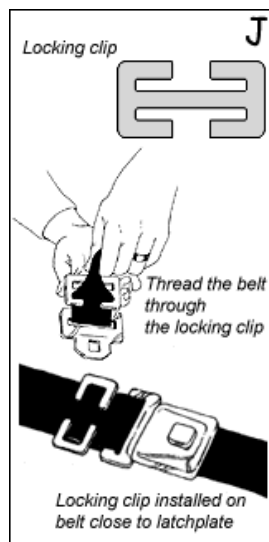
If this kind of belt does not stay tight, see if the latch plate is fastened right at the place where the belt turns to go through the slot in the safety seat (F) or around its frame. In this position, the belt may slide through the latch plate. Turn the adjustable end of the belt over (G). This will keep it tightly locked in most vehicles. This also may help keep the belt from loosening slowly over time.

Lap/Shoulder Belt with a Free-Sliding Latch plate

This kind of belt (H) has one piece of belt webbing that slides through the latch plate even when the belt is buckled. It usually has an emergency locking retractor. It stays loose except in a crash or sudden stop. To lock this belt around a child safety seat, use a metal "locking clip". Some belts are labeled to tell you the locking clip is needed (I). First check to see if it has a switchable retractor that allows the retractor to stay locked.

How to Install a Locking Clip on a Lap/Shoulder Belt With a Free-sliding Latch plate

If the lap/shoulder belt (H) does not have a switchable feature to lock it around a child safety seat, you should use a metal "locking clip" (J) to keep it tight. You will find this clip attached to the side or back of most new safety seats. If you do not have a



locking clip, you can buy one from a safety seat manufacturer or from Ford, Nissan, or Toyota dealers. Here is how to install the clip (J) .

1. Put the belt through the correct path on the safety seat and buckle it.
2. Push down on the safety seat. Pull up on the shoulder end of the belt until the lap belt is pulled tight.
3. Hold the two parts of the belt together at the latch plate and unbuckle it.
4. Thread the belt through the locking clip as shown, close to the latch plate.
5. Buckle the belt again. If you put the clip on right, the belt will now stay tight around the safety seat.
6. Remove the locking clip when the belt is not holding a safety seat.

The regular locking clip that comes with most child safety seats must be used in this way only.

Belts That Do Not Lock

Belts with emergency locking retractors in the lap part of the belt stay loose. these belts do not have switchable retractors and need a special belt-shortening clip (heavy-duty locking clip) to shorten the lap belt. Such belts are:

- Lap belts in front seats of many cars that have automatic shoulder belts;
- Lap belts in rear seats of some older cars;
- Often on belts with lap and shoulder belts sewn onto the latch plate (P). These latch plates may be found in front or rear seats.

Automatic Safety Belts

Some automatic shoulder belts are attached to the door and wrap around you when you close the door (K). Others have a motor which moves them along a track above the door (L) when you turn on the vehicle. The best way to avoid problems with these belts is to buckle up children in the back seat.

Most automatic shoulder belts have separate lap belts. Some of these lap belts lock, but many do not. Some are "switchable". Some vehicles (Cougar, Thunderbird, 1989-93; some Nissans) offer a separate "child seat buckle" to use with the front seat lap belt to hold a safety seat.

Where **both** the lap and shoulder belts are attached to the door (M), as in many GM and some Nissan and Honda cars, they should not be used to secure a child safety seat. To anchor a child safety seat, it is necessary for your car dealer to install a special "attaching belt."

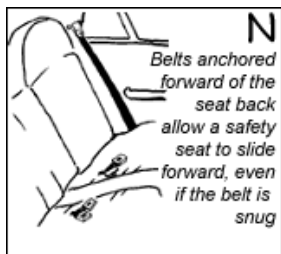
Contoured Bucket Seats and Child Safety Seats

Some vehicle seats have hollows and humps that prevent the safety seat from resting flat on the cushion. Use another position if possible, or find a safety seat with a base that fits better in your car.

Always check your vehicle owner's book for belt information

Belts Anchored Forward of the Seat Back

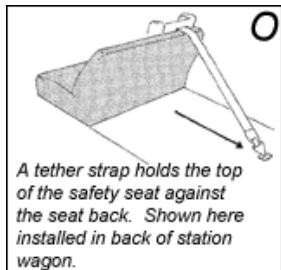
Belts that come out of the seat cushion or from the side of the vehicle seat (N) may not hold your child's safety seat against the vehicle seat back. Test your child's seat by pulling it forward and sideways. If the base moves, use a different seating position unless your vehicle owner's book shows you how to make the belt system



hold a child safety seat securely. A tether may help.

A Tether Can help Keep A safety Seat Secure

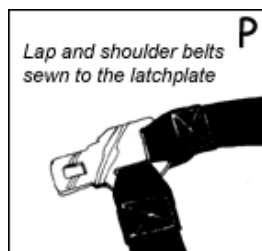
A top tether strap (O) anchors the upper part of a forward-facing child safety seat when it is bolted to the frame of the vehicle. It may be the only way to keep a safety seat secure if belts are anchored forward of the seat back. A tether aids protection even when the safety seat is held firmly with a lap belt.



Some manufacturers have tether kits for their forward-facing safety seats. Do not attempt to install a tether on a safety seat not made to use one. Many vehicles have holds drilled behind the rear seat to hold a tether anchor. Some have nuts installed. Check the owner's manual for tether anchor locations.

Lap and Shoulder Belts Sewn to the Latch plate

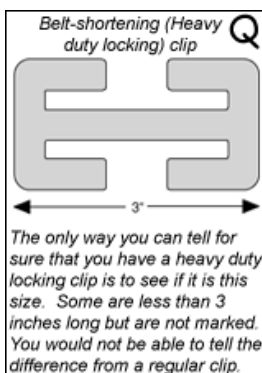
Some belts have the lap and shoulder parts sewn separately to the latch plate (P). Check to see if the lap belt can be locked or "switched" to one that locks. If not, use a special heavy-duty locking slip to shorten the lap part of the belt.



How to Shorten Lap Belts That Do Not Lock

If a lap belt or lap part of a lap/shoulder belt with a sewn-on latch plate does not lock and cannot be "switched" you can shorten the belt to make it the right length to hold your safety seat tightly.

You will need a special belt-shortening clip ("heavy-duty" locking clip, Q). This special clip is available **only** from Ford, Toyota, and Nissan dealers. Your vehicle owner's book may explain how to use it. (Toyota locking clips come with instructions.)



This heavy-duty clip looks just like a regular locking clip but is made from extra-strong metal. Some are a little bigger, about three inches long. If you buy a heavy-duty clip, mark it with a dab of nail polish or paint so you will know which kind it is.

Warning: Use **ONLY** a heavy-duty locking clip to shorten a lap belt. Use of a regular locking clip to do this would put your child in serious danger in a crash. The regular clip could bend and release the belt, leading to possible serious injury.

Use a locking clip to shorten a belt **only** if you know that it came from Ford, Toyota, Nissan and you have instructions for using it. If you have questions about how to use locking clips or keeping child restraints tightly secured in your vehicle, call your vehicle customer service line.